

MIDDLESBROUGH GAZETTE JAN 12 1970

SAME WYCOMBE

—FOGGON TEST

HIGH-FLYING Wycombe Wanderers, ten feet tall after holding mighty Middlesbrough to a draw in the third round of the FA Cup on Saturday, will be a few thousand feet high tonight when they

Boro must improve on this display!

YOU COULD find a host of reasons for putting your money on Boro in the FA Cup third-round replay against Wycombe Wanderers at Ayresome Park tomorrow night (7.30), writes **CLIFF MITCHELL**.

Home advantage, Division I against non-League, psychological pull of having drawn at Wycombe—all these things spring to mind. But the biggest and best reason of all is that no team could possibly play two matches in succession, as badly as Boro played on Saturday.

They were unrecognisable. The know-how and skill that have taken them to the top of the First Division were missing for 90 long, frightening minutes and at the end several players openly conceded they were mightily relieved to hear the final whistle — against a side of part-timers from the Isthmian League!

John Hickton spoke for all his team mates when he said it was the worst pitch he had ever played on. The fantastic slope was unbelievable; the surface a mixture of sand and mud.

Said Alan Foggon: "When you were on the move it was bad enough. But once you'd stopped and had to get going again up the hill, it was terrible."

I'm told they breed their footballers with one leg shorter than the other in Bucks. Certainly that slope takes some getting used to and it's no wonder the Wanderers have lost only once at home in two years.

All this helps to explain, not to excuse. Because a team of Boro's stature should have been able to adapt so much better than they did.

They looked nervous and scared. The taunts of the crowd — "Easy, easy" and "What a load of rubbish" — should have wounded their pride so painfully that they stormed back at their opponents.

It didn't. They accepted it meekly and fatalistically. They allowed their hard-running rivals to make up for their modest footballing ability with determination, drive and honest, amateur endeavour.

Incredible

And on the day it could so easily have brought the shock result of the year — alongside Wimbledon's incredible triumph away to Burnley, I can still scarcely believe that one!

At the start I mentioned reasons for Boro winning the replay. Here's another—incentive.

The winners are at home to Sunderland in the fourth round on Saturday, January 25. And if that's not worth fighting for, nothing is!

Cup pairings

The full draw is:

Aston Villa v Sheffield United.
Bury or Millwall v Mansfield.
Carlisle v Bolton or WBA. Chelsea v Birmingham. Coventry v Arsenal or York. Fulham or Hull v Notts Forest or Spurs. Ipswich v Liverpool. Leatherhead v Leicester. Leeds v Wimbledon. Manchester, Un or Walsall v NEWCASTLE. Orient or Derby v Bristol Rovers. Plymouth v Everton or Altrincham. Southend or QPR v Notts County. Stafford Rangers or Rotherham v Peterborough. West Ham v Swindon. Wycombe or MIDDLESBROUGH v SUNDERLAND.

jet north to Teesside Airport.

They'll stay the night in the airport hotel, do a spot of training at Boro's Hutton Road ground tomorrow, then take the field at Ayresome Park tomorrow night (7.30) hoping to emulate the feat of their non-League colleagues, Wimbledon, who won at Burnley on Saturday.

After the replay tomorrow they will travel overnight back to Wycombe, arriving at 5 a.m.—in time for a couple of hours shut-eye before starting work.

Because these part-timers

— By —

CLIFF MITCHELL

will have had one day off, and they can't really afford any more!

So they'll return smartly to their home. But not to glory if we can believe both managers. Wycombe's Brian Lee stressed again today that he thought his team had no chance. He added:

"Obviously Middlesbrough didn't play as well as they can on Saturday. We won a points decision, possibly because they are not used to the pressure and enthusiasm we showed."

Good team

Boro's boss, Jack Charlton, had this to say after training with his men today:

"When we get them on a flat field I can't see them causing us any problems, as they did on Saturday. On their own field Wycombe are a very good team. It is bumpy and it slopes—and my lads could not get accustomed to it.

"Whether Wycombe are good enough to huff and puff us out of it as they did there will be decided tomorrow.

"What is sure is that we are taking this very, very seriously.

"The lads have a lot to make up for after Saturday.

"I said after the first game that we would murder them here. Well if we do the job right, we can do that. But I repeat—we've got to do the job right."

Boro's skipper, Stuart Boam, said that Wycombe had proved they could play well and so they had to command respect. But he was wholly confident that Boro would be meeting Sunderland in the fourth round!

Determined

That was the mood of all Boro's players. They are fiercely determined to win back their sours and their pride with First Division display tomorrow night.

Wycombe will field an unchanged side. Charlton waits until tomorrow, and a fitness test on Alan Foggon, who has a calf muscle strain.

● Bobby Murdoch will be available for Boro's match at Ipswich next Saturday. Tomorrow's Cup replay ends his two-match ban.